Alternative publishing distribution models for African journals with reference to Africa, the journal of the International African Institute

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Abstract

Taking the example of our journal *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute*, published since 1926, now in its 78th volume, the leading UK-based and international African studies journal that publishes on the whole of Africa, and in all disciplines of the humanities, social sciences and environmental sciences with its related annual *Africa Bibliography*, a review of the annual published research output of Africanist and Africa-originated scholarship, this paper surveys publishing models for journals in African studies in the North and South, in the e-publishing environment. I focus on the model of the society/research institute owned journal partnering with a commercial/university press, which is common in the Northern countries. In particular how this model resolves questions of finance, stability and sustainability. Equally, I evaluate alternative publishing distribution models, and the benefits and drawbacks. The example of AJOL is pertinent, admirable and pioneering in promoting the visibility of African-published journals, providing access between countries in the continent and outside the continent, as well as providing valuable data on Africa bibliography. However the sustainability of the model for the journals themselves is less apparent; notably it does not address the question of subscriptions: the life blood for the viability of independent successful journals throughout the world.
Introduction

This paper considers different publishing and distribution models for African studies journals. The case considered in detail is that of *Africa* the journal of the International African Institute (IAI), where I coordinate publishing activity.

*Africa* is the journal and main organ of dissemination for a long-established international African studies academic institution. I first give some brief background on the history of the IAI, and the place of its journal within the field of the study of Africa. I then discuss the publishing model employed by the institute for its journal, and consider the models of some other comparable African studies journals, and models for the dissemination of journals edited from Africa. Particular emphasis is given to the implications of electronic journals publishing.

Within the context of debates and publishing initiatives within and beyond the African continent, and flowing from our experiences of publishing an important journal in the field, I offer some more general reflections on the possible directions of publishing African journals in the era of electronic publishing.

Background of the IAI

The IAI was established as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC), in London during the inter-war period in 1926. It had a dual mandate of providing an international centre to promote research and dissemination of information and knowledge on Africa cultures; and increasing and strengthening the link between knowledge and practical activities and the needs of administrators, educators and missionaries (Schapera 1949).

The institute has evolved through the variously identifiable periods in African studies, from colonialist, missionary and anthropological discourses; through the independence and decolonization periods; to the postcolonial period. In its early days, the institute was a powerful player in colonial politics in Europe and Africa. To give some indication, its first and founding Chairman was Sir Frederick Lugard from 1926–1944. From 1957–67, the chair was occupied by the former governor-general of the then Belgian Congo, M. le Gouverneur-General Moeller de Laddersous. A lasting example of colonial anthropology is the IAI’s series of ethnographic surveys (55 in total), providing detailed accounts of African culture (Ntarangwi, Millls and Babiker 2006).

The IAI has always been central to the complicated history of colonial and postcolonial anthropology and writing. A good example was the relationship between Jomo Kenyatta and the renowned British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. It was with financial support from the IAI that Kenyatta published his seminal work, *Facing Mount Kenya*.

1 Estimate based on the number of journal included in the ‘African Journals Online’ (AJOL) initiative.
which Malinowski, in his introduction declared – somewhat paternalistically but with prescient foresight – to be one of the ‘first really competent and instructive contributions to African ethnography by a scholar of pure African patronage (Malinowski 1938, cited in Ntarangwi, Millls and Babiker 2006, p. 14). It is also significant that the first volume chosen for publication by the institute in 1931 was by an African, Chaka by Thomas Mofolo (Crowder 1987). Published in an English translation from the original Sesotho,2 Chaka is a widely cited classic of African literature, and to this day earns royalty income for the institute.

The institute was renamed the International African Institute in 1946 and the real departure in its development came during the years 1945–50, when Africa was under the editorship of the institute’s longest-serving director, Daryll Forde. The 1950s and 1960s were the heyday of British social anthropology and few anthropologists of note who worked in Africa did not publish in the journal (Peel 1980, p. 244; Barber 2008).

This period also marked the burgeoning and ‘Africanization’ of African studies, driven by the onset of decolonization and early liberation. Paralleling the re-location of African studies to the African continent and the flourishing research centres in Ghana, Ibadan, Ife, Dakar, Dar es Salaam and Makerere, rivaling SOAS and Wisconsin, the later 1960s and 1970s marked a change in the institute’s orientation: ‘Full of confidence, the Institute made its contribution to the research that was seen as fundamental to decolonization…and made sure that this research was properly disseminated’ (Crowder 1987, p. 116).

In 1965, the prestigious IAI Lugard lecture was delivered for the first time by an African, Dr Nana Nketsia IV, on the topic of ‘Cultural Revival in Africa’. The first continental African and first academic Chairman, Professor Jacob Ajayi of Nigeria, was appointed in 1975. In 1982, the ‘Africanization’ of the institute took on another dimension, when in a period of financial crisis, persuaded by Professor Ajayi, the Nigerian government, provided funding that enabled the institute to stay afloat (Crowder 1987), reflecting a sharp irony that an institution that had begun essentially as a colonial organ had become such a key repository of African scholarship that it was considered worth salvaging through African offices. The present chair is the scholar and philosopher Professor Valentin Y. Mudimbe.

Today, the institute’s aims are cast in general terms of the advancement, promotion and dissemination of African studies research, achieved chiefly through a programme of scholarly publishing.

**Publishing and the Publications Committee**

The publishing programme is overseen by a Publications Committee, effectively the editorial board. The committee draws on scholars from all disciplines, aiming to represent the key academic African studies institutions in the UK. The Publications Committee has been ‘determined to seek ways of bringing to the attention of the world at large the very considerable work being undertaken by African scholars’ (Crowder 1987). This remains the case today.

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The institute continues to publish the most eminent scholars in the fields of African studies and anthropology. A few past and present luminaries of the study of Africa published by the institute are: Emmanuel Akeampong, Samir Amin, Karin Barber, Alex de Waal, Patrick Chabal, Mary Douglas, E.E. Evans Pritchard, Jack Goody, Jane Guyer, Monica Hunter, Bronislaw Malinowski, Z.K. Matthews, D.A. Masolo, Achille Mbembe, Thomas Mofolo, John Middleton, Simon Ottenburg, JDY Peel, Mamphela Ramphele, Isaac Schapera, Monica Wilson and V.Y. Mudimbe.

Africa. Journal of the IAI

The institute’s journal, Africa, has been published since 1928. It is interdisciplinary and has a distinguished record of publishing on African societies and cultures, and on all regions of the continent, including North Africa. Africa, together with the institute’s wider publication programme, is arguably the institute’s most lasting achievement and enduring contribution to African studies (Crowder 1987; Middleton 2009 forthcoming).

Seventy-eight volumes have been published to date. The journal is published in four issues a year. It is the second oldest British Africanist journal, after the journal of the Royal African Society, which was, subsequently, renamed African Affairs. Africa may lay the claim to be the first African studies journal to focus on international cooperation, specifically upon development (Last 1990). Since inception, the journal and other IAI publications have maintained the dual concerns of the purer academic disciplines, and applied development studies.

A key editorial concern is with the ‘local perspective’, indigenous anthropology and local knowledge production. It is maintained that knowledge about and knowledge in Africa are one and the same thing, and inseparable. The ‘intellectual production’ with which the journal is concerned is more extensive that that which is commonly confined to formal publishing. For example, Africa has published work in African languages right from its beginnings. Local knowledge and its transmission are ever relevant to the journal. Electronic publishing now allows the publication of longer extracts in the online edition, together with interpretative essays. A special issue on the topic of ‘Knowledge in Practice: expertise and the transmission of knowledge’ is planned for 2009.

Moreover, the journal is the main source of revenue that supports the running of the IAI, notably, its other publishing activities. In all, some 500 books and serials have been published in the institute’s lifetime. These include early ethnographic surveys, the Handbook of African Languages series, the International African Bibliography (until 1981), the Africa Bibliography (from 1984) the African Issues series, African Abstracts, the Environmental Reports series, the Classics of African Anthropology series, the International African Library series, the International African Seminar series, the African Arguments series (books of topical relevance to the African continent); the Readings in... series (for tertiary level teaching), and some 100 monographs in many subjects including African languages, philosophy, law and anthropology.

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3 This figure is approximate, and includes the 78 volumes of Africa.
Publishing the journal

For most of its life, *Africa* has been published under contract to a university press. From 1928–1974, it was published by Oxford University Press. From 1982, it was published by Manchester University Press. Edinburgh University Press (EUP) took it on from 1991, and is the current publisher of the journal.

EUP is a wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Edinburgh. As a university press, it shares similar values to the IAI of advancing research through publication. EUP is ‘committed to the furthering of knowledge, learning and education, and promoting cultural and intellectual debate of the highest standards’. As *Africa* is an important journal to our publishers, the IAI maintains considerable leverage in negotiating arrangements and terms.

Models of learned society and professional association publishing vary considerably. Based on studies commissioned from the UK, it is estimated there is a near equal division between societies that do their own publishing, and those who contract it out to a third party, with some doing both with comparable levels of success (ALPSP and Blackwell 2004; RIN 2006). By publishing a journal under contract is meant that labour, publishing responsibilities, costs and income are divided between the society and the university press.

There are doubtless advantages of both routes, depending on the nature and aims of the journal and society. But a model whereby the journal (and other) publishing activities are contracted out may be proving more robust financially, and ultimately sustainable. Certainly, this is the experience of the institute. Other similar organizations in the field of African and development studies report a shift in this direction. For example, the Nordic Africa Institute (pers. comms. 2008) has indicated recently that it is planning to sub-contract out the publishing of some of its research. These exigencies are driven in part by pressures on the organizations from donors, government and internal funding requirements to operate financially self-sustainable models; but they may be brought about by the transformations and possibilities of electronic information and communications technologies, where economies of scale are central. It would not be feasible, for example, for the IAI to establish an electronic platform for the publication of its journal; whereas harnessing resources with Edinburgh enables successful electronic publication and significant income for both parties.

In the case of the IAI/EUP, the IAI is responsible for appointing and managing the editor/editorial board and the reviews editor, and managing changes. The IAI handles copyright agreements with contributors, and maintains control of the reviewing and management of manuscripts, peer review, supporting authors, sorting out illustrations, providing any additional e-content, and commissioning special issues. The institute has oversight of some production aspects: the copy-editing, proofreading and proof-matching.

The university press is responsible for typesetting, page formatting, production of proofs, printing, storage, marketing and sales, promotion to authors, promotion to libraries, online systems, usage statistics, data conversion and subscriptions management. EUP is also responsible for the electronic publication of the journal. Conferences are split or attended together. EUP is responsible for the arrangement of other revenue streams, including reprints, offprints, rights
managements, legal permissions, and managing the journal as part of its list.

The IAI shares editorial intelligence and specialist knowledge of African studies with the press as ‘marketing feedback’, which helps boast efforts that ensure the success and viability of the journal.

Electronic publishing

Electronic journals publishing is only about twelve years old. It is still in a process of development and experiment, with publishers still grappling with the implications of migration from a print to an online publishing environment (ALPSP 2005). It is estimated that 90 per cent of UK/US emanating journals are published online, with a figure of 60 per cent given for all journals published worldwide (RIN 2006).

Africa came relatively late to electronic publishing, compared with the other major UK African studies journals, only establishing an electronic journals platform in 2008.4 However, the journal was available through third party e-platforms, prior to this date, notably through Project Muse, EBSCO, JSTOR, and ALJC.

The establishment of our own electronic site for the journal is opening up various new possibilities. The first development was to offer free password protected subscriptions to institutions in Africa. Editorialy, the online edition allows the publication of longer extracts and supplementary material. And we are now able to ‘publish ahead of print’ online, with advance access and notification options available.

The financial and subscriptions models

The IAI and EUP have a royalty-based contract. EUP pays the institute a percentage of net income. Additionally, the publisher takes responsibility for some of the editorial costs (copy editing, professional proofreading, making the index). The other common arrangement between society and publisher is a profit or revenue sharing arrangement.

Of the total income, earned by the journal, revenue from subscriptions represented over 85 per cent for the years 2005–7. Revenue from subscriptions as a percentage of the total revenue is falling slightly, as new online revenue comes on stream. Whereas in 2005, over 90 per cent of revenue to the journal was earned by subscriptions, this figure was 82 per cent for 2007. The increasingly significant online revenue streams are subscriptions from the non-profit US initiative Project Muse, and revenue from dissemination of the journal through the following platforms: EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale, JSTOR and ALJC. The total online revenue stream has increased from about 7 per cent in 2005 to about 14 per cent in 2007. With our publishers, the IAI continues to monitor the shift in revenue streams from subscriptions to online sources. From 2008, the journal has been available electronically for the first time directly, with the objective of encouraging users of the journal to subscribe directly through Edinburgh, and decreasing our dependency on third party platforms.

4 See www.eupjournals.com/afr
We are also planning to make our journal available to institutional subscribers as part of consortia and subject packages. These singly priced bundles are sold as multi-journal packages, incorporating print and electronic formats. They are increasingly driving journals sales in the Northern industry, as corporate consolidations within publishing, and notably the journals sector, have led to increasing number of titles being published by a handful of publishers. From an estimated 20,000-25,000 peer reviewed scholarly journals published worldwide (RIN 2006, p. 5), ALPSP reckons that some thirty non-profit and commercial publishers are responsible for over 50 per cent of journal titles. The UK context is dominated by a small handful of less than half a dozen major journals publishers – Reed Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Informa (which includes the Taylor and Francis group), and the two large university presses, Oxford and Cambridge, a situation which makes it difficult even for the reasonably established specialist journals published outside of these entities to compete.

**Geographical distribution**

The geographical distribution of our subscribers is international, currently US 40%; continental Europe 32%; UK 18%; Africa 10% (over half of which are free subscriptions); Canada 2.5% and the Far East c. 3%. Other editors of UK African studies journals report that up to 50 per cent of their subscribers are in North America. Whilst there are vital debates in African publishing about the nature and place of ownership and earned revenue of a journal (see below), this distribution does confirm the assumption that any African studies journal sustained on the basis of revenues from subscriptions and other online revenue must capture an international readership in the field, wherever the journal originates.

The proportion of subscriptions to the journal in Africa is currently higher than at any time in its history, at 10 per cent. The reasons for this development are the mechanisms of epublishing, along with our changed access policy to offer free subscriptions to the electronic journal for Africa-based institutions. Until 2007, African subscribers were less than 5 per cent of the total, most of which were South African university libraries. Now, there are institutional subscribers from throughout the continent, including from Sierra Leone, Egypt, Uganda, Namibia, Ghana, Senegal, Sao Tome, Benin, Malawi and Cameroon. The initiative was launched midway through 2008, and we anticipate attracting more subscribers through this route. Nevertheless, the figures of African institutional subscribers, and the number of submissions from Africa, are still comparatively too low. Given the truism that the core of African scholarship should emanate from within the continent, we would expect the number of African subscribers and contributors to increase over the coming period, which we have stated as being the journal and institute’s highest priority (Barber 2008).

**Cross subsidy**

Revenue from the journal represents around 60 per cent of the institute’s operating income. The money is used to cover organizational running costs, and to cross-subsidize other publishing activities, notably the publication of scholarly monographs and edited collections of papers. Income is also used to subsidize reduced subscriptions to members of related African studies membership organizations (the African Studies Association UK and the Royal African Society), free subscriptions to the e-journal for institutions of higher education, research institutions and
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libraries in Africa, and some donations of appropriate printed materials, including the journal’s associate publication, Africa Bibliography, to libraries in Africa through the London based charity, Book Aid International.

Other African studies journals

Africa is one of a group of complementary, prestigious UK-published African studies journals. Other notable titles are African Affairs (107 volumes), Journal of African History (49 volumes), Journal of Modern African Studies (46 volumes), Review of African Political Economy (35 volumes), and Journal of Southern African Studies (34 volumes). Some European continentally published titles relevant to our sector include Journal of Religion in Africa (38 volumes) (published by Brill, Leiden), Politique Africaine (27 volumes) (Karthala), Cahiers d'études africaines (published since 1960), and Afrika Spectrum (42 volumes), published by GIGA Institute of African Affairs, in Germany.

These journals, whether with an institutional or society basis, such as Africa and African Affairs, or emanating from editorial collectives such as the Review of African Political Economy and Journal of Southern African Studies (JSAS) tend to be published under contract to commercial or university press publishers. These include Taylor and Francis (ROAPE, JSAS), Oxford University Press (African Affairs), Cambridge University Press (JMAS, Journal of African History).

Informal discussions with other journal editors tend to indicate their general satisfaction with these kinds of publishing arrangements. Editors cite, notably, that commercial contracts had led to increased circulation, hence income, which allows them to develop the journal, organize writers’ workshops, subsidize copies for Africa, and free up time from managing subscriptions and distribution to concentrate on editorial work. For example, at a recent meeting of the ASAUK, a founding editor of JSAS reported that income from their publishers allows them to make editorial contributions and hold workshops in southern Africa, seven of which have taken place. Some development/NGO journals such as Oxfam’s Development in Practice and Gender in Development, and the World Literature journal, Wasafiri, are published under contract to Taylor and Francis, and informally report similar benefits. In all cases, the journals retain editorial control, and the publishers assume responsibility for the production, marketing and subscriptions.

Publishing arrangements with commercial publishers do tend to impose higher subscriptions rates. For example, there is a noticeable difference between the titles published by the large UK or ‘global’ publishers as compared with prices in continental Europe. Some of the US-published journals, such as Africa Today and Research in African Literatures compare favourably in price with their UK counterparts. But the larger publishers are also more likely to support access initiatives to developing countries. Oxford University Press, for example, offers free or deeply discounted access to countries on the basis of World Bank classification of countries’ GDPs, and participates in other non-profit initiatives such as those run by INASP, HINARI, AGORA, OARE, TEEAL and eIFL.net.5

5 For further details, see http://www.oxfordjournals.org/access_purchase/developing_countries.html
Using subscription income from the Northern institutions to cross-subsidize access in developing countries may be a pragmatic ‘make-do’ solution for the African journals keen to bridge North-South divides in access to information and publication. The model does not however address the exigencies of the Open Access movement or the fundamental marginalization of Southern scholarship and publication in the academic market place. But it is allowing these journals to maintain their viability, quality and frequency of publication, and wide dissemination, whilst at the same time meeting some of the other demands of editors, societies, universities and developing country institutions for access to, and participation in, publication.

Journals published in Africa and Open Access

Others represented at this conference will doubtless address the Open Access movement in greater depth. But given the roots of Open Access in electronic publishing and the importance of its ideals to everyone concerned with the scholarly study of Africa – that peer-reviewed scholarly literature should be available unrestrictedly for the benefit of scientific communication throughout the world, and that economic disadvantage should not prevent access to information – I will make a few remarks about its possibilities from our perspective.

The IAI was involved in an earlier initiative designed to facilitate the distribution of African scholarly journals within Africa, establishing the African Journals Distribution Programme (AJDP) in 1998 with the ‘long-term objective to make a contribution to the development and improvement of the quality of research in Africa through the provision of reliable and regular intra-African channels of communication’ (Zell 1998, p. xii). This ambition was fulfilled by the landmark African Journals Online (AJOL) initiative, established by the International Network of the Availability of Scientific Publications in 1998 to bring African-published journals online.

Whilst it is perhaps worth observing that not all journals on AJOL are fully Open Access, in the sense that all content is fully downloadable, AJOL doubtless represents the most significant Open Access portal to African journals. AJOL has the facility for journals to be available Open Access through its site, with 51 journals currently being fully open access, from a total of 331 journals. At over 15 per cent, the rate of Open Access journals on AJOL is significant. Other journals on AJOL may have some level of Open Access, the rest being a mixture subscription-based and pay-per-view/document delivery, with progressive models of charging depending on user profile. INASP, its founding organization, has long been an advocate of the easy availability of scientific and scholarly publication, commissioning for example an ‘Open Access survey of Africa-published journals’.

The undoubted success of the AJOL project is the visibility and promotion of the journals, though not necessarily their economic viability, arguably beyond its scope. Lack of viability in many of the African-published journals on AJOL is reflected in the fact that many journals are not publishing new issues frequently. A closer examination of how may of these journals could be

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said to be actively publishing reveals than no more than 25 per cent had published a new issue in 2008.\textsuperscript{7} It probably would be quite incorrect to state that there is a causal link between Open Access and the quality and frequency of publication: there may be more fundamental editorial, educational and financial factors typically afflicting African-originated publications at stake. However, regularity and quality of publication are crucial and must be achieved – whether a journal is Open Access or a subscription journal – both to support the model, and retain the confidence of all stakeholders in the journal: contributors, readers, librarians, reviewers and publishers.

In the case of \textit{Africa}, it is difficult to see the means by which we could make a transition to some form of Open Access without considerable external funding, or loss of institutional support for the journal. We must already acknowledge the largely voluntary contributions from the editor, contributing authors, peer reviewers, book reviewers and guest editors, and the indirect subsidies and reward systems at play: university salaries, assessment criteria (in the UK, the ‘Research Assessment Exercise’, which rewards publication in peer-reviewed journals), and career promotion. For \textit{Africa}, additional to the loss of subscriptions revenue, there would be serious questions about losing the paper journal, special issues, and edited book reviews. Moreover, for \textit{Africa} and the other UK African studies journals, an ‘author pays’ model would seem out of the question, given the imperative to attract African scholars. Open Access is likely to raise the same two main problems for African published journals, namely, dependence on subscription income for sustainability and viability, and the impossibility of an ‘author pays’ model. Institutionally based solutions (whereby academic institutions find means of funding publication), which must lean on the resources of research-intensive universities, would likely be inequitable given the scarcities of resources in many African universities.

\textbf{Some further reflections on African journals publishing}

Journals are the lifeblood of the scholarly enterprise, a primary site of scholarly exchange and conversation within and between communities and regions. They are the primary dissemination channel and public record of new research and development. Journals’ publishing is particularly important in the social sciences, for career advancement, and communication with peers. There is strong preference for publishing in peer-reviewed journals. The reputation of a journal, including impact factor, are important feature where authors seek an outlet for articles. Journal articles are also viewed as essential resources by the reader community. There is no hard data, but surveys suggest than journal usage is generally increasing (RIN 2006, p. 63).

Scholarly journals’ publishing is notably international, as compared with educational or trade book publishing: many contributors to journals wish to publish and be read internationally, and libraries purchase foreign journals. It has been noted above that the sustainability of \textit{Africa} is dependent on its international subscriptions base.

Yet we are mindful of the marginalization of African scholars in research and publication, particularly, in Northern ‘Africanist’ materials, which has debated at length, notably by Zeleza (1997, 1998); and of the persistent asymmetrical power relations within African Studies that

\textsuperscript{7} At the time of view, August 2008.
favour dominant non-African scholars and discourses, and requiring of a sea change in attitude (Olukoshi 2007). We are mindful too of the need for the African continent to own its means of intellectual production. As pioneered and advocated since independence by institutions such as CODESRIA, and many independent publishers based in the continent represented by the African Publishers Network (Apnet) and the African Books Collective (ABC), the imperative of African scholars, universities and publishers must be for a strong and vibrant publishing industry and for publishing to be owned and directed from within the continent.

Nor should arguments about the international nature of journals publishing be diluted by the enticing notion that electronic or ‘international’ communications can transcend geo-political boundaries. The African continent generates only 0.4% of global online content, and excluding South Africa the figure is 0.02% (Grey 2006, citing UNECA). English remains the dominant language of online content, despite the fact that English first language speakers comprise no more than 0.007% of the whole African population (Grey 2006).

In this context, the need for African publishers and journals to find a more sustainable model in the best interests of a vibrant publishing and research model overall is paramount. Historically, particularly in the sciences and social sciences, authors first publish articles in journals, which they may develop into fully-fledged books. In Africa the weakness of journals publishing impacts on books publishing. Whereas in the North, journal publishing is a lucrative profit-driven business, and able to cross-subsidize books publishing, financial constraints in Africa may discourage the general publishing of journals, where publishers instead tend to concentrate on school textbooks.

However, particular with regard to electronic journals publication, which is the brave new world in which we live, whilst there is support amongst the scholarly community and other users of journals for increased electronic content given the flexible access it affords, though printing is still common practice for reading purposes, there are real issues of cost and economies of scale for establishing electronic journals platforms. Observers have noted that electronic publishing has simply made it more expensive for low income countries, both in terms of access and publication. Allison Moeller, in an earlier edition of this conference, dispelled the notion that ‘widely anticipated financial savings that was forecast for the electronic medium has not come about; instead we are finding scholarly journals to be more expensive. Publishers who have invested millions in developing electronic platforms have undoubtedly passed on the cost to the subscriber. She concludes ‘electronic publishing has achieved some time efficiency but at great cost’ (Moeller 2004). Even journals which have considerable funded institutional support may not be able to sustain electronic publishing, without recourse to commercial publishing arrangements.

There are some examples of journals originating from the African continent which have entered into agreement with multinational, commercial journals publishing and dissemination outlets, and their superior electronic platforms. The Journal of Southern African Studies has had experience of facilitating electronic and print publication for some South African journals through the global commercial publisher, Taylor and Francis (pers. comm. 2008). These journals now published by Taylor and Francis include African Studies, whose editors are at the University of Witwatersrand; Development Southern Africa; Politikon; Journal of Contemporary African Studies; and Social
Dynamics, with editors from UCT and Stellenbosch. Journals retain editorial control, meantime, the global publisher handles the production, marketing, distribution and dissemination, provides IT infrastructure for electronic publication, and purchasing power in arranging the consortia deals detailed above.

Editors of these journal report that the main advantage has been increased circulation and its considerable financial contribution to their journals, which can be reinvested in the journal, thus improving sustainability. These journals were reportedly not able to achieve the same level of stability when they were published in South Africa, and were losing money. The editor of the Journal of Contemporary African Studies, for example, reported that Taylor and Francis undertook to increase the circulation of the journal when they took it over, especially in the US market. This has been achieved. Annual income has grown considerably, and the editor can now employ a part-time assistant. Politikon reports a similar experience. African Studies was on its last legs when Taylor and Francis took it on, but has survived, and more. Other advantages were stated as the ability of Taylor and Francis to promote their journals. With a huge marketing machine, they attend virtually all the African studies conferences. They also impose professional discipline on a journal’s production process, setting up delivery dates and schedules relating to all steps in the editorial/production process, which can be very helpful to journal editors.

Of course, any such departures would need to be taken with great care and caution, always with an eye to both long term and immediate objectives and effects. There needs to be tight contractual and copyright control, probably with provision for affordable or free subscriptions to the Africa institutions from which they originate, and with clear regard for the impact on local publishing capacity. But if managed strategically, journals may be able to exploit their copyright to earn income through international subscriptions and online revenue sources for their journals, at least for a period of time until they are able to furnish their own journals publishing operations within the continent. As Zeleza (1998, p. 27) has observed: ‘…publishing scholarly journals through partnerships with commercial publishers is fraught with difficulties and can undermine a journal’s intellectual integrity and affordability. But if carefully exploited, it offers perenially broke editors an important source of production and marketing resources. This is an opportunity that African editors need to explore and exploit, instead of simply relying on subventions from parent organizations or donors, and subscriptions from individuals and institutions.’

Lessons from the book industry may be instructive too. The late Victor Nwankwo, a publisher in Nigeria, and – perhaps, tellingly – a civil engineer, was the pioneer of the introduction of the ‘print on demand’ mechanism into African books publishing. In advocating the early adoption of new technologies by African book publishers to overcome some of the barriers to publication and dissemination, he compared the situation with aviation technology: just because African countries did not manufacture all their own equipment, did not mean they could not fly, instead they must use and exploit what was available to them for their own benefit. The African Books Collective’s print on demand programme, spearheaded by Nwankwo’s groundwork, has enabled African scholarly and trade book publishers to access Northern distribution and income, by harnessing the print on demand technology and wholesale distribution model to the African-originated and

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8 Victor Nwankwo (1942–2002) was managing director of Fourth Dimension Publishing, the publishing house he set up in Enugu, Nigeria, from 1977–2002.

And there may be alternatives, and perhaps in the future there will be better models, notably and promisingly those offered by the AJOL initiative, which unlike the largely disinterested commercial publishers, has at heart the interests of the development of journal publishing and research in Africa, and to that ends, to bring African published journal online, with various models of income generation, which the journals themselves control.\(^9\)

There are questions about the practicalities, viabilities, ethics and long term impact of all such scenarios. In this respect, there is probably need for closer dialogue between journal editors, academics and publishing colleagues in Africa and the North, agencies and institutions such as INASP/AJOL, ABC, the IAI, CODESRIA and other African studies centres as to the best routes to publication, taking cognizance of particular circumstances and motivations. This paper has outlined the model for the journal of the IAI; other examples may be instructive.

\(^9\) http://www.ajol.info
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